Submission from the **Australian Curriculum Studies Association** to the **Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority** on the **draft Australian Curriculum K-10**.

The Australian Curriculum Studies Association Incorporated (ACSA) was established in 1983 as a broadly based educational association supporting the professional interests of educators in curriculum work from all levels and sectors within and beyond Australia.

ACSA works to support educators so that all students have access to a meaningful, relevant and engaging curriculum. ACSA provides national advocacy and leadership in curriculum. It is committed to curriculum reform informed by the principles of social justice and equity and respect for the democratic rights of all.

ACSA has been a supporter of the introduction of a national curriculum for Australian schools. In 2003 the ACSA Executive identified the need to focus on approaches to national curriculum. Since that time ACSA has facilitated discussion and debate with all stakeholders by:

- convening numerous forums enabling national conversations about approaches to national curriculum
- establishing and leading the **Curriculum Standing Committee of National Professional Educational Associations** made up of all the peak national professional associations focused on curriculum
- facilitating discussion through its journal **Curriculum Perspectives** which is contributed to by leading educators in Australia and internationally.
- Commissioning opinion pieces to inform debate.

ACSA provides the following comments as a constructive contribution to the complex task of developing the Australian Curriculum. The major focus of our submission is issues relating to the curriculum as a whole rather than specific discipline areas.

The ACSA Executive has identified the following key issues of concern:

- **Rationale**

  The curriculum as it is currently presented lacks a plausible rationale. The rationale should address the way in which the new Australian Curriculum delivers the outcomes of the Melbourne Declaration.

- **Design and development process**

  In considering this curriculum and the process so far the following questions need to be asked: What is the whole curriculum? What is the broad scope and sequence? How are concepts,
outcomes and assessment linked? How will stage 2 and stage 3 subjects relate to the four that have currently been developed?

The development of the first four subjects in isolation from other subjects taught in schools does not allow for an understanding of how all discipline areas related to each other and a clear understanding by practitioners of the whole picture. This is an obvious result of the speed at which the new curriculum is being developed. This does not follow what we know to be sound practice for educational change.

· **Overcrowded curriculum**

The curriculum as presented raises concerns of overcrowding. As a result of the development of four discipline areas in advance of others and a lack of a clear indication of time allocation it is difficult to see that the curriculum won’t be overcrowded with the introduction of stage two and three discipline areas.

The new curriculum also needs to be careful that the amount of content does not restrict the time students need to develop conceptual understanding and the use of teaching methods that engage and motivate students.

· **Implementation and the role of professional associations**

At present there is no clarity about the implementation of the new Australian Curriculum and the role of ACARA, new national bodies and the States and Territories. This needs to be articulated for all stakeholders.

The possible role of professional associations has not been addressed. Professional associations are a valuable source of expertise and would be an excellent resource to support implementation of the new Australian Curriculum and to ensure buy in from practitioners.

All teachers will need professional learning to enable them to effectively implement the new curriculum. This will need to be done in an extremely short timeframe.

Schools may also need to increase the number of teachers in certain subjects; availability of appropriately trained teachers may become an issue.

· **Assessment**

The link between assessment and achievement standards needs to be clarified. In looking at the new Australian curriculum assessment seems to be assessment ‘of’ learning. Assessment should be ‘for’, ‘as’ and ‘of’ learning. There is also a need for a framework around the achievement standards.

In addition to the above broad issues the ACSA Executive makes the following observations:
Inconsistencies of approach and terminology across subject areas make comparisons difficult.

The history curriculum has no definition of the study of history which would be advisable and particularly helpful to primary teachers. It lacks concepts and has too much content and the Studies of Asia within the history curriculum is tokenistic therefore not providing an opportunity for empathy skills to be developed by students.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are referred to as one group rather than separate groups.

Indigenous content is lacking throughout the curriculum.

Prioritization of some ‘general capabilities’ over others is problematic, and

The ambiguous status of Civics and Citizenship is problematic.

ACSA supports the development of a national curriculum for Australian students and reiterates its willingness to work with ACARA in the further development and refinement of THE Australian Curriculum K-10.